

Differential Object marking in Southern Italian dialects, with particular respect to Sicilian

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November 21, 2006

Differential object marking (DOM), also known as *Prepositional Accusative* in Romance Linguistics, is a variation in the realisation of direct objects, and is characterized by a case system that marks a subset of direct objects with an overt coding. This phenomenon is controlled by semantic-pragmatic features of the Os referents, such as Animacy, Definiteness, Specificity and Topicality. Many theories explain it in terms of *Markedness Reversal*: Comrie (1979, 1989), among others, assumes that DOM is due to the necessity of disambiguation between Subjects and Os when they share the same semantic properties, *i.e.* when Subjects and Os referents are both [+animate] and [+definite]. These values are unmarked for Subjects but marked for Os, so Os that are semantically similar to Subjects must be morphosyntactically marked. In this paper I suggest a different view of DOM, based on an analysis of a corpus of data of Southern Italian dialects, with particular respect to Sicilian. Using the framework of *Transitivity Hypothesis* put forward by Hopper & Thompson (1980), I will attempt to show that DOM is a marker of High Transitivity and depends on Transitivity parameters. According to Hopper & Thompson High Transitivity has an O that is high in individuation, *i.e.* animate, definite, specific (for example cross-linguistically Os that are low in individuation tend to be expressed by intransitive constructions, *i.e.* noun incorporation, see Lazard 1994) is more morphosyntactically marked.

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